



# **Rijeka European Capital of Culture 2020**

**Second Monitoring Meeting**

**Report by the Expert Panel**

**Brussels, July 2018**

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture  
Directorate Culture and Creativity  
Unit D2

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## Introduction

This report follows the meeting in Rijeka on 28 June 2018 between the panel and Rijeka, one of the two European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) in 2020<sup>1</sup>. Rijeka was designated as the European Capital of Culture 2020 in Croatia in July 2016 on the basis of the panel's selection report<sup>2</sup>. The Rijeka 2020 bid-book is available on the organisation's website<sup>3</sup>. The first monitoring meeting was held in Brussels on 8 March 2017<sup>4</sup>.

This report is addressed to the Rijeka 2020 organisation (2020 LLC) and will be published on the European Commission's website<sup>5</sup>.

## Attendance

The panel members:

Sylvia Amann, Cristina Farinha (Chair) and Agnieszka Wlazel (Rapporteur), appointed by the European Parliament 2018-2020

Ulrich Fuchs, Aiva Rozenberga and Pauli Sivonen, appointed by the Council of the EU 2016-18

Beatriz Garcia, Jiří Suchánek and Suzana Žilič Fišer, appointed by the European Commission 2017-2019

Alain Hutchinson (absent), nominated by the Committee of the Regions 2016-2018

For Rijeka 2020:

Vojko Obersnel - Mayor of the City of Rijeka

Ivan Šarar - Head of the Department of Culture, City of Rijeka / President of the Rijeka 2020 Supervisory Board

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<sup>1</sup> The European Capital of Culture action is governed by Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council for the titles 2020 to 2033, which provides for three formal monitoring meetings between designated cities and the panel.

See Decision at:

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG)

<sup>2</sup> See selection report at:

[https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2020-croatia-report\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2020-croatia-report_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See bid-book at:

<http://rijeka2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ri2020-eng-web.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See first monitoring report at:

[https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/library/ecoc-2020-rijeka-first-monitoring\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/library/ecoc-2020-rijeka-first-monitoring_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/capitals-culture\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/capitals-culture_en.html)

Slaven Tolj - Artistic Director, Rijeka 2020

Emina Višnić - CEO, Rijeka 2020

Irena Kregar Šegota - Development and Strategic Partnerships Director, Rijeka 2020

Iva Grego - Operations Director, Rijeka 2020

Alma Čakmazović - Communications and Marketing Director, Rijeka 2020

Davor Mišković - Director, Drugo more

Dominik Damiš - Head of Marketing, Rijeka Tourist Board

Marin Blažević - Croatian National Theatre "Ivan Zajc", Director

Also, in attendance were observers from the European Commission (DG EAC) and from the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

## Report from Rijeka 2020

The Organisation submitted a detailed and comprehensive written report in advance of the meeting. The report outlined the past and future activities of the Organisation in preparation for ECOC 2020.

At the meeting Rijeka 2020 made a presentation which included the following points:

- Local and regional elections were held in May 2017. The Mayor of Rijeka has been reappointed and will serve until 2021. Rijeka 2020 is experiencing full support – financial and logistical – on all levels of territorial governance including strong national political support from the Prime Minister and the Government of Croatia, following the Decision of the Government regarding the ECOC in Croatia from July 2017. The financing agreements are signed on yearly basis and for 2018 agreements have been signed with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism. The County is still working on budgetary plans, but in general funding at this level of governance is also in good terms.
- Overall, the team is unchanged and has the full Mayor's support.
- The capital investment for territorial development is higher than originally estimated. The city was more efficient than planned in securing funding for infrastructural development. For example, Rijeka was the first city in Croatia that got the financial support from ITI funds and as a consequence the whole Brickhouse will be finished on time, i.e. in April 2020, as well as the new City Library building (2021) that was not originally included as ECOC-linked infrastructure. Progress is satisfactory: three capital projects are finished, two are in progress and two are in the phase of preparation for tenders. To deal with the influx of projects, the Municipality's cultural department increased the staff

number in the team dealing with infrastructure and EU capital projects from 3 to 11 people.

- The Organisation is in full operational capacity with staff and internal procedures in place. A new internal structure is implemented, which includes a new unit for executive production and logistics as implementation phase starts soon (a director will be hired in the last quarter of the year). Following the very recent departure of the Culture director, the management considers shifting responsibilities rather than hiring a new Culture director. Possibly, the CEO will take over more artistic coordination and transfer some of her current administrative or financial tasks within the team.
- The budget (of 30 million EUR) will be distributed either via ECOC 2020 or directly to producing organisations. In the latter case, trilateral contracts are to be signed between the relevant organisation, the Municipality and the ECOC. The contribution of the National Government is 10 million Euros (as initially planned), and the city will contribute with 10,3 million (also in line with the initial projections), while the budget from the County is not totally secured yet.
- As far as the programme is concerned, Rijeka 2020 follows the bid-book and only 5 projects included in the bid-book have been withdrawn so far. Rijeka produces or co-produces approx. 50% of the projects. The whole programme will be announced and published in September 2019. The team believes that the programme is realistic, contextual and attractive and that it articulates values of courage, unusualness, progressiveness and ambition. The overall dramaturgy for 2020 is ready and clear, and new projects will emerge to increase visibility, attractiveness and diversity. Rijeka 2020 collaborates with many European partners. The Croatian National Theatre reviewed its plans and introduced artistic genre, geographical and gender balance in its theatre, with classical music, dance and opera productions and presentations. A "Summer in the city" programme is being introduced and will serve as a pilot project before the ECOC year.
- The tourism board of the city is actively involved, and a destination management system is ready to keep all relevant data.

## Discussion

During the subsequent discussion the panel sought clarification on a number of issues and offered experience and advice. Topics discussed included the following:

- The panel inquired about the development of the cultural strategy beyond 2020. It appears that neither the Municipality nor Rijeka 2020 work on this issue for the time being, but that the future strategy will be a concern of the policy lab in RiHub and will be fed by the evaluation of the ECOC.
- The focal point for the CCIs strategy is RiHub, which will provide a space (1200 m<sup>2</sup>) and a preparatory playground for the cultural and creative industries. The

team is trying to link businesses with the cultural and creative sectors, offers capacity building and supports communication.

- The newly appointed audience development officer starts working on the 1st July and an audience development strategy - including baseline studies - will be ready by October 2018. Yet it is unclear how the team will approach European audiences, and not just European tourists.
- As far as monitoring and evaluation are concerned the results of a tender procurement has been just announced (two offers from partnerships were submitted, and the winner is a consortium mixing international with local experience). It is foreseen that the plans for monitoring and evaluation are presented soon and that every six months the ECOC will also present the results of the monitoring process. A person will be appointed to liaise with the consortium, and media data will also be collected.
- Programme clarification - 50% of the programme will be produced outside while the ECOC 2020 will be the leading organisation - but not the only producer - for the remaining 50%.
- The panel was interested in knowing more about the developments in terms of European dimension, especially how the ECOC would link with emerging European issues. As Europe is in a somewhat difficult and rapidly changing situation, the panel wondered how the team would respond to this, in particular whether there would be space in the programme for risky/bold projects addressing sensitive issues as well as cultural activities prompting an open political debate on challenges emerging during the ECOC year. The artistic team explained that this was indeed an ongoing concern and that they deeply look at contemporary European issues, all the more because the three main topics of the programme (water, work and migrations) allowed for this kind of flexibility.
- Responding to a question by the panel, the Organisation said that Rijeka 2020 was also a priority for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and that a ministerial conference would be held in Rijeka in March 2020 in the frame of the upcoming Croatian EU Presidency. Rijeka will also be presented during various diplomatic occasions, for example in Strasbourg in November 2018 as part of the six-month Croatian chairmanship of the Council of Europe. A cultural diplomacy conference will also be held in 2019 with international participation.
- The capability of the programme to draw interest in Europe was raised by the panel, and the team highlighted some new interesting projects, but was aware that more was needed, so further strategies would be developed in September 2018. It was also mentioned that in 2017 Kvarner region registered 2,8M visits and 14,8M overnight stays while in the neighbouring Istria there were 4,1M visits and 25,4M overnight stays, that the number of flights to Krk/Rijeka was in the increase and that there were few other airports in a 1 to 1,5 hour drive distance from Rijeka, creating good transport opportunities for European audience/tourists wishing to visit Rijeka 2020. The panel however highlighted that the challenge

would be to transform Rijeka/Croatia into a cultural destination focusing on assets going beyond the sea and the sun.

- The "Carnival – opening ceremony" changed shape so as not to mix with the traditional parade. The ECOC will organise additional events during the opening weekend that will give a foretaste of the whole ECOC yearly programme. A special group in charge of the main concept is developing a dramaturgy connected with the main locations in the city. The event will include cultural institutions, companies, NGOs and individual artists and will use the city and the sea as a set for the event.
- The delegation confirmed that the ECOC enjoyed full support, including technical from the municipal cultural institutions and their 500 employees.
- The panel asked whether there was a plan B in case the infrastructure projects would not be ready in time. The team is not expecting any delays as everything is now in the pipeline and the plan is to use the openings of the various new infrastructural projects as monthly ECOC highlights. Many openings are planned in the mid of 2020 while the opening of the new library is planned for early 2021 and will in that sense mark the closure of the year as a legacy of the ECOC year. Other investments are treated as projects/brands/labels, e.g. the Brickhouse, and not solemnly as dedicated physical space. Furthermore, there is enough exhibition space in the city in case of unforeseen problems. The only space – venue that cannot be replaced with an adequate substitute is the ship Galeb.
- The panel was interested in the concept for the Galeb yacht - its aims, programme and communication, including the EU dimension and its relation with 'red tourism'. Moreover, it wanted to know whether the intention was to create a thematic connection between the very sensitive Goli Otok project and Galeb. The team explained that the plan was to question our today's perceptions and to present various points of view as well as a critical outlook at the story and use of the ship and at the history of this part of Europe in connection with the rest of the continent from the end of WWII until now. A non-linear narrative with open problematics is the main concept and the team is not afraid of going into risky territories.
- Citizens will be involved in various ways e.g. through open calls, RiHub and also the newly established business club. A Citizens' Council campaign will be launched in September 2018. The Council will be involved in selecting new projects from an open call.
- The panel asked how other cities - notably former ECOC candidates - and national institutions were involved in the ECOC. The team is interested in cooperation with national institutions e.g. Dubrovnik summer festival and Croatian theatre in Zagreb. There are ongoing projects with 5 cities in Istria and projects with the Zagreb's independent sector. The cooperation with Osijek has not progressed yet. The number of projects taking place in Zagreb will be limited as the goal is to attract Zagreb audiences to Rijeka.



- The organisation's staff will increase to 50 by end 2018 and reach 80 people in full employment by end of next year. The plans are that in 2020 and 2021 the team will start decreasing in number.
- The aim of the communication strategy is to position Rijeka as a city of culture promoting the 'Rijeka way of life' while the slogan 'Port of diversity' has not been changed. Tools aiming to increase cultural tourism will be developed.

## Recommendations

1. The city's cultural strategy must be further owned by the Municipality's cultural administration in order to steer the ongoing implementation process as well as the ECOC legacy. The plans for 2021 and the years after should be developed in a joint endeavour with all relevant stakeholders and publicly discussed and communicated.
2. Artistic engagement in the programme and independence from the Municipality should be maintained.
3. The European cooperation should be further developed, building also on opportunities such as the first Croatian EU-presidency in 2020 (including for example the Presidency's cultural programme in Brussels). It is therefore important to build good working collaboration with both the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
4. The focus on European cooperation projects should be continued, and there is a need to further define and focus on the key target groups in terms of European audiences (going beyond the tourists visiting the region).
5. According to Rijeka plans, at least 50% of the programme should be co-productions. Own productions, co-productions and labelled projects should be clearly identified. Such a programme overview is also required for the final monitoring meeting.
6. The panel recommends sticking to the idea of two opening events and ensuring that the opening will include a clear artistic component. However, creative synergies or distinction between both events is needed. Such a double event will enable crossovers and inclusion of various audiences in both celebrations creating very interesting audience development opportunities. Once the conception is finalized, the production should also be planned well beforehand as it is a demanding event personnel-wise.
7. The panel advocates for further involvement of the region and other Croatian cities with concrete cooperation projects. This applies especially to former candidate cities and strategic collaboration with national cultural institutions in Zagreb.
8. The development of a strong narrative prompting an open debate for the Galeb project in the sense of a shared recent European history reflecting on the implications of this period for the East and West parts of the continent as well as on drawing lessons for the future is recommended. The most promising way to do it seems to be a process-oriented

rather than a product or outcome-driven approach, including debate and open discussion formats.

9. It is recommended that the Goli Otok project is treated not only as a venue for events but as a project with a narrative created through a participatory process.

10. There is a need to develop a strong communication strategy related to the main messages of the ECOC programme and to adapt it to different audiences as well as geographical layers (local, national, European and international), notably in connection with specific projects. This requires a more in depth work of related communication narratives with European dimension in mind.

11. Rijeka 2020 should start developing contacts and agreements with TV production and broadcasting companies. The involvement of an expert (e.g. TV director) in the preparatory phase would strengthen the impact of such activities.

12. There is a need for a strategy to support audience development and engagement with tactics to increase diversity and inclusion (and not separation) of various audiences (e.g. minorities) with baseline studies completed as soon as possible.

13. A clear organigram is needed to better understand the role of the staff members. The employment strategy should be revised in order to boost the staff morale and avoid earlier staff departure during the ECOC year. Staffing in 2020 and 2021 should be developed.

## Next steps

The panel acknowledges the great work carried out by Rijeka 2020 since its nomination and the first monitoring meeting, and appreciates the progress being made and plans for subsequent years. Additionally, on the 29 of June the panel was able to visit several key venues of Rijeka 2020 and was provided with confirmation of the political, institutional and civic support for the project which highlight positive developments in the ECOC Rijeka 2020 preparations.

The panel puts itself at the disposal of Rijeka 2020 for any questions, through the Commission services.

The Commission will call for a third and last monitoring meeting in November 2019.

The panel would like to thank Rijeka 2020 for very informative and interesting meeting and visit, as well as for hosting this second monitoring meeting in its premises, and looks forward to the next developments of its European Capital of Culture project.

(Signed) all present panel's members

